

# How to Pray

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# How to Pray

**W**HY should we pray? Why is it so important to pray? Why is it so hard to pray? What is our part in prayer? How shall we pray?

Here are some of the many problems in prayer. Let us see what we can do by way of answering these questions. We may begin by examining the situation. We live in two worlds at once. We live, first of all, in a world of things,—of material things: a world of clothes and food and business, an outward and visible realm which we can touch and feel and taste and see and smell. This world is important because God made it to glorify Him and to give us a way, through our bodies, to find our path home to Him. Above all, this realm of things and of bodies is supremely important because God Himself has blessed the material creation when He Himself “was made Man.”

Secondly, we also live in a world of spirits,—a spiritual realm. There are right desires and high ideals in the heart of every man; longings for



truth and beauty and love. The spiritual world is important because God created it for the same reason that He created the material world: to glorify Him and to afford us a way, through our souls, to find our path home to Him. In addition to this, the spiritual world is important because "God is pure Spirit," and we are made in God's image, destined to attain to His likeness. To hasten our union with God, He has given us spiritual aspirations which can only be satisfied by God Himself. St. Augustine wrote, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and restless are our hearts until they rest in Thee." Baron von Hügel has echoed the Bishop of Hippo's prayer when he said that God has put salt in our mouths that we may thirst for Him.

God has made these two worlds and placed us in both of them at one and the same time. That fact serves as a hint to the answer of some of our difficulties in prayer: it is so hard to pray as we ought, because we must live true to the highest ideals of both the material and the spiritual world simultaneously.

How do we get in touch with these two realms? In the material world, we make contacts by means



of our "senses": by touching and by feeling and by seeing and by tasting and by smelling. In the spiritual world God lifts us up to union with Him by prayer.

Why should we pray? Because prayer is the means of achieving contact with God. By prayer we enter into Christian life. The most Christian thing we can do is to pray.

Perhaps these thoughts have suggested the answer to the query, "What is prayer?" Prayer is communion with God, prayer is talking with God, prayer is friendship with God. It may help us in our thoughts about prayer as being communion with God, if, at this point, we look back over our lives and sketch out a little history of our prayer life.

In our childhood we prayed with great simplicity, earnestness, and devoutness. Prayer was very real to us, and the matter of answer to our prayer did not concern us with the sense of importance that it assumed later. It was perfectly natural for us to pray, and we prayed about the ordinary things of our lives: our studies, our games, our natural wishes. But, later, our humility waned. We formed the habit of thinking of



prayer as a means of getting what we wanted. We considered praying in something of the same way that a business man acts when he presses one of a row of buttons on his desk: to summon this or that person to the doing of his will. We thought of praying as Aladdin rubbed his lamp: to get something. We treated our prayers in the same way that the children of Israel used the Ark of the Covenant: they carried it into battle to protect them, but in no way did they alter their mode of life. We said our prayers to get things for ourselves, and our prayer had no moral effect on our lives. It was something we did as hard as we could to get what we wanted.

Many people think of prayer merely as a means of attaining their desires. A young man wrote the other day, saying that, in his illness, he had prayed hard, and the priest had prayed hard, but he supposed that neither of them had prayed hard enough, because nothing had happened!

But let us continue the history of our prayer life. After we had come to the conclusion that prayer was not worth much because we did not get what we wanted, perhaps a friend with a little learning (and that is dangerous) about psy-



chology (and there is nothing more dangerous) came and said, in a slightly superior tone of voice: "Oh, by all means, go on praying! Of course nothing really happens objectively, but still it's a very good thing to pray. It calms you, quiets you, and makes you better equipped to do your real work."

There are a number of things to be said in reply. In the first place, such an explanation always reminds one of the low-down trick that a father once played on his two very active and rather bothersome boys. He did not know how to be a real father and companion to them, so he solved his problem by getting rid of it. He said: "Go out into the back of the garden and start digging. Perhaps you will find some buried treasure there." The boys went off and left him in peace all day long as they dug furiously. When they reported at close of day that they had found nothing, this father said: "Well, anyway, it did you a lot of good; it was good exercise, wasn't it?"

That can be said on a purely human plane. And to lift up the problem to the highest possible spiritual plane, surely no one would think for a moment that our Lord agonized in prayer purely to "feel good." Something happened in Gethsemane.



“But what happened?” perhaps you ask. The answer is that our Lord redeemed the world and you by His prayer, a perfect offering of Himself to God. In and through His prayers our Lord was united to His Father.

Here lies a clue to the difficulty that we find in our prayer-life today, when we say, “What’s the good in saying prayers?” There is no good in the mere saying of prayers. But to pray is much more than mere repetition of words.

## I. WHAT IS PRAYER?

**W**HAT is prayer? Prayer is communion with God. Prayer is a relationship with God. Many of our difficulties in prayer lie in the fact that we have not realized our full relationship with God. Our doubts arise because of our fatal habit of asking before giving. But if we examine the Lord’s Prayer, we find three aspirations of praise before we presume to say “Give us this day our daily bread.” And a short, model prayer runs, “I praise my God this day, I give myself to God this day, I ask God to help me this day.” Only after praise and dedication comes petition. So first of all, prayer is union with God.



Then, secondly, we must realize that it is also communion with God. Prayer is both a state and an act. If you wish to talk to a neighbour, you can do so by the telephone. But the wire which connects you must be upheld at regular intervals by good strong posts. If a winter's storm breaks down these posts, the line of communication is severed. To be "union with God," prayer must be upheld at regular intervals by acts of "communion with God." The soul that prays constantly, on the street as well as in church, is liable to be the soul that is regular in definite acts of prayer. He has established a rhythm of prayer, at morning, at noon, at evening, before the altar, at meditation.

And, thirdly, this regular relationship of union and communion was begun by God, not by the soul. The average soul at prayer thinks that he has begun the relationship. He goes into church, kneels down, closes his eyes tight, prays hard—and all the time is watching to see what happens! He should not be surprised that nothing happens, except an increase in self-centeredness, self-contemplation, and self-interest. The regular union and communion which constitutes ideal prayer is a state that was begun by God.



We call this truth the "Prevenience" of God. This teaching is that God is always first in our lives, first in knowing us, first in loving us. "Not that we loved God," says St. John, "but that He first loved us." He is nearer to the soul than the soul is to himself; He knows more about the soul; He loves the soul far more than the soul loves himself (which is a great deal). God is first in our lives, stirring us up to desire Him and seek Him. St. Bernard preached a very lovely sermon to his monks, telling them that long before they had been awakened for their Lauds, God was in the chapel, calling them to Himself. God begins the relationship in prayer.

Any wise teacher understands that he must lead on his pupils to make their own discoveries. Any good pastor knows that the soul that discovers his own selfishness is far more convinced of that fact than if he had been merely told that he was selfish. A young man once said to his confessor, "Father, I never realized until now how utterly selfish I am." The wise priest smiled. He did not say, "My son, I could have told you that long ago." He said, "Let us bless God that He has revealed how much you need Him."



To put this matter of the Prevenience of God in prayer in a very human way, note what a wise wife does when she needs a new hat. She knows that she should not ask for any additional article of clothing. The bills for the insurance and the children's illness have been great. So she puts the idea of her need into her husband's mind. Walking down the street with him, she mentions that a mutual friend has just had a new hat. Speeding their parting guest she admires, in his presence, her hat. She puts the idea into his mind, so that passing a hat shop, he burst out, "Mary, you ought to have a new hat." He thought he had originated the idea. She knew better. So it is with God. He is first in our lives, inspiring us to come to Him in prayer. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

## II. OUR PART IN PRAYER

**I**N the preceding section we learned that prayer was a state and an act of regular union and communion with God. In this action, God takes the initiative. But we must not think for a moment that all the work should be done by Him. We have our part to offer. What is our part in prayer?



A learned bishop once wrote: "God giving Himself to the soul, the soul giving itself to God,—in this is the sum and substance of Christian perfection." This one sentence may sum up all of our Religion,—and it will describe our prayer life. God has given Himself to us, and we must approach Him and yield ourselves to Him. Prayer, on our part, becomes an act of humble gratitude and loving self-surrender. Our part in prayer is to pay attention to God. We call this action "Recollection," or remembering the "Presence of God." Brother Laurence wrote a beautiful book about "The Practice of the Presence of God." It will help you to read and study his presentation of the fact of God's Presence in all of life.\*

How shall we in our way try to express our part in prayer? Perhaps you can remember back to school days, when your mind would often wander far away, and you were brought back to the present by hearing the teacher rap on the desk and say, "Pay attention!" That is our part, to quiet our bodies and pay attention to God.

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\* Another book on the same subject is "The Presence of God," by Fr. Whittemore, O.H.C., published by The Holy Cross Press.



Recollection, paying attention to God, cultivating the Presence of God,—this is our first step in Prayer. It is very important. Some one has said, “If you have three minutes for prayer, take two of them to get ready.” That is exaggeration, but serves to teach the lesson of our part in prayer. One of the reasons why we make the sign of the cross when we make our prayers, is that we should delay a moment before rushing into relationship with God. Think of the hours that a woman will spend in preparation for the short minutes of her presentation to the King at Buckingham Palace. Shall the Christian soul neglect preparing to enter the Presence of the King of kings? It is very important to prepare rightly to realize God’s Presence. Here arise some of our hardest problems in prayer.

First of all, let us realize that we can never prove that God is present. There are a great many arguments which we may rightly use to demonstrate the existence of God. But in your prayer life you can never “prove” Him present in the same manner that you can demonstrate that two plus two equals four. But you know by faith that God is present. What, then, must you do when you ap-



proach the Presence of God? Make a simple act of faith in God present. Perhaps it may be clearer if you realize that you are always in God's Presence and that you can never get away from Him. Read the opening lines of "The Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thomson. Read "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Laurence. Follow the example of the French peasant who said, when questioned about his prayers, "I just look up at Him, knowing that He looks down at me." Say simply, "My God, I do not ask to prove Thee present, it is enough to know that Thou art here." This is the meaning of the expression "an act of the Presence of God."

Secondly, remember that you will never "feel" the Presence of God in the same sense that you "feel" the paper of this tract. We are a highly emotional people, we love sensations. Feelings tend to over-influence us. But you will never be able to "feel" God in a material way. God is pure Spirit. God is Love, and Love is not an emotion, Love is not a cheap sensation. Love is forth-going and self-giving. It may be that an emotion or feeling will come as a *result* of an act of love. But you can never "feel" God in a physical way. The



next time that you think you “feel” God, look around and see if you are not sitting in a draft!

Perhaps it will be more clear when you consider the matter further. You cannot feel God present. And if in your prayers, you are paying attention to feelings, why you are doing just that,—*you are paying attention to feelings*,—but you are not paying attention to God. All the great spiritual writers warn us against giving too much attention to feelings. An emotion may come, as we have said, as a result of your act of love. It *may be* that the emotion comes from God. But *in itself* the feeling is not God; you must simply offer it up to God, and turn your attention back to Him. To keep dwelling on the emotion, however lovely, would be to remain in self-contemplation. And self-centeredness leads easily to sin.

You can never feel God present. St. Bernard states the matter very clearly when he writes: “I confess, then, though I say it in my foolishness, that the Word has visited me, and even very often. But although He has frequently entered into my soul, I have never at any time been sensible of the precise moment of His coming . . . I have never been able to feel His coming or His



departure. . . . the Word has never made His coming apparent to my sight, hearing, or touch. It was not by His motions that He was recognized by me, nor could I tell by any of my senses that He had penetrated to the depths of my being."

You will never "feel" God present. When you find yourself desiring a feeling of God, remember that you are desiring just that,—a feeling of God—but that is not God. Hasten to say, "My God, I do not desire to feel Thee present, it is enough to know that Thou art here."

To go to God as an act of faith trains us in making that transfer from emotions to faith, which is at the heart of the Christian Religion. We ought to be very grateful that true religion demands of us faith rather than feelings. It is easy to "emote" when we are young. But after forty, it becomes a bit of a strain. We must learn to pass from a natural life to a super-natural one. A friend wrote, "Well, Father, I found another gray hair the other day; I hope I am growing in faith. I had some teeth out last week; I trust I am growing in humility."

What is your first step in prayer? Make an "act of the Presence of God." This means: kneel down,



make the sign of the cross, quiet your body, and say such words as these: "O my God, I do not ask to prove Thee present; O my God, I do not ask to feel Thee present; it is enough to know that Thou art here." An act of the Presence of God serves also to quiet ourselves. This is very important. We are a restless people. The rush of modern life is very disturbing. Restlessness creeps into every department of our life. Some people are even living on wheels, in trailers. It is necessary to quiet our bodies, not only to pray, but also to work. You are in prayer what you are out of prayer. Professor James stated this idea when he said, "You learn to skate in summer and to swim in winter." He meant that your personality was one and the same whatever you did. You are in prayer what you are out of prayer. If you are restless and domineering and fussy and irritable in your home life, you will find that you are the same in your prayer life. If you would guard against that bad temper at home, begin by being quiet and attentive to God in your prayer life.

Perhaps you may think that we have wandered far from the point, which was what we can do



as our part in prayer. But we have been learning the importance of disciplining ourselves, turning away from our desires, and paying attention to God. In the light of what we have learned, we will be able to understand and answer some of our chief difficulties in prayer.

### III. DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER

THE most common difficulty is that of wandering thoughts. We find it difficult to “pay attention to God.” First of all, realize that this is a very common difficulty. The greatest of saints have been troubled by it. No one of us can hold his attention fixed for even the length of an “Our Father.” How do you say the Lord’s Prayer? Is it not something like this: “Our Father Who art in heaven hallowed be—my goodness, I forgot to turn off the light when I left, well, it can’t be helped—Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us—I forgot to bring any money for the collection, well, it’s a rich parish—lead us not into temptation but deliver us—did you ever see a hat like that— for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

When you found that your mind had travelled



down town to buy lunch, were you irritated with yourself? Do not waste further time in being cross with yourself. Bring your attention back to God. If you are thinking about your wandering thoughts, you are not paying attention to God. If you are thinking about your weakness in having wandering thoughts, you are not paying attention to God. What should you do? Just try to concentrate on God.

A second very common difficulty in prayer is its aridity. We complain that our prayer is so unprofitable. We say, "When I began my meditations, they were very comforting, but now I don't seem to get anything out of them." What is the answer? Surely you know it by now: you don't pray to "get something"—and if you pray to get something, you are paying attention to that something. If you pay attention to sweetness and consolations, you are not paying attention to God.

#### IV. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

**I**F prayer is initiated by God, and if our part is to go to Him in faith, what can we do practically? Here are some suggestions:

1. Have a definite place in which to pray. The



church is the best place; but if we cannot go to church, we can go apart somewhere where we can be alone. Just as we associate a mother's presence with a certain chair, so we can learn to associate our prayer with certain places.

2. Have a definite time to pray. Set aside certain times each day for prayer.

3. Pray by the clock. Do not try to "say a lot of prayers." Resolve, for example, to pray for ten minutes daily.

4. Learn "acts of prayer." Practice them on the street. (See Appendix A.)

5. Turn your whole life into prayer. This is called "acted prayer." If you have little time, turn what you are doing into prayer. Pause a moment before beginning your work and offer it to God.

6. Resolve to work at your part in prayer. Perhaps at one time you could speak French. Now you can't. Why not? Because you have not kept on talking French. How do you learn to pray? By praying.

Thus the necessity of self-discipline in prayer brings us to another very important consideration. That is, "How we pray."



## V. HOW WE PRAY

**H**OW do we pray? Here again the answer does not lie in what we do, but in what God has done for us. We pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord." An examination of the collects in the Prayer Book will reveal the fact that almost all of them are addressed to God the Father, and offered "through Jesus Christ our Lord." What does this phrase teach us?

In the first place, we are to pray "after our Lord's example." Christ's life was perfect. He knew that He came from God, that He belonged to God, that He was going to God. His whole life became a prayer,—the offering of Himself. Christ's life was perfectly surrendered to His Father. "True prayer is the voice of the child to the Father." He is the ideal Child, the perfect Son, the completely surrendered Man. Christ our Lord, the perfect Man, lived out His Life as Man in this very world of ours, in perfect communion with His Father. The union and communion of the human mind and heart and will of Jesus was the perfect prayer.

We pray after His example, with surrendered minds and hearts and wills,—the offering of our



fied with Him. We are "in Christ" and Christ is in us. St. Augustine said, "The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of men might become sons of God." The Bishop of Hippo also said, "Let us break forth into thanksgiving; we are become not only Christians but Christ." The Latin is clearer than the English: "Christus facti sumus." And St. Leo says, "The body of a baptised person is the flesh of the Crucified."

Our union with Christ through baptism identifies us with Him. He is the Perfect Son, and since we are in Him, we have received true filial relationship to God. So we pray, not only "after" Christ, but also "in" Christ. The voice of our Lord sounds in every true Christian prayer. That perfect union and complete self-surrender which we could not achieve "on our own" is accomplished for us by our incorporation into Christ by baptism. Thus, taken up into Christ in heavenly places, we can plead all that He is and all that He has done by His perfect Self-giving. Only "in Christ" can we realize our relationship, not only to the Father, but also to all souls who are one with us by baptism.

Thirdly, this complete self-surrender which is



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demanded in our prayer "through Christ our Lord," demands that we must work out this ideal here in this life. This means that, although we are already risen in Christ, we must also walk the Way of the Cross with Him.

What do we understand by the Way of the Cross? It means for the Christian just what it meant to Christ,—obedience and self-giving. The great characteristic about Cross-bearing is its voluntary character. "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." "He laid down His life because He willed it."

The Way of the Cross, voluntary self-surrender "to Christ" and "in Christ" and "by Christ" requires that we must become so identified with Him that we each become an "alter Christus,"—"another Christ."

Again, this ideal of becoming united with Christ by baptism and the Way of the Cross is no impossible ideal,—it has been attained by many earnest souls. The story is told of a missionary who went far up a river in China, to a place where he thought no Christian had ever gone, and there he preached Christ. When he spoke of One who was perfect, of One who went



about doing good, of One who suffered for those He loved, the missionary was surprised to see the Chinese nod their heads, as if they knew whom he described. So he said, "Of whom do I speak?" They answered, "Why, yonder he sits," and pointed to an old man. He had heard Christ preached in his youth, and had yielded himself entirely to Christ; when the missionary spoke of our Lord, the Chinese thought he was speaking of their aged hero.

All souls are called to manifest the Lord so completely that they may each be an "alter Christus," "another Christ."

Such complete self-surrender and wholehearted obedience is costly. It requires that we choose to walk the Way of the Cross, by voluntarily accepting God's will. We must be obedient to God in all things and in all departments of our life. We must be obedient to God, to His Holy Church. Practically speaking, the obedient soul says "Yes" to God and "No" to self. This ideal should be carried out daily, even in little matters. See to it that not a day passes but that you have said "Yes" to Him" and "No" to yourself. It is in such manner that "Thy Will be done" becomes



the key note of all true prayer.

It is in this kind of living that the sincere Christian learns to pray "through Christ our Lord." The Christian's prayer is not "Please do for me what I want," but "Please help me to do what You want." Thus life becomes a prayer offered thankfully and humbly to God. It is for this reason that "the prayer of the righteous man avail-eth much," and we can understand the problem of why we should pray at all. The Christian does not only *say* prayers,—he *becomes* a prayer, a faithful and thankful Christ-possessed soul.

## VI. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

**S**O we come to the heart of the problem of prayer. Why should we pray? If prayer is not an attempt to change God's mind; if prayer is not dictating to God; if we shall not always get what we ask for, why pray? We know that God is not a Santa Claus or a Solver of cross-word puzzles. The God to whom we pray is a Father; all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful. He is our Saviour who has redeemed us by His Precious Blood. He is the Holy Spirit—He is entirely our Friend.



If God knows all ("Your heavenly Father knoweth all things ye need before ye ask,") and if God will care for us as a loving Father cares for His trusting children, then "Why should we pray?"—and yet He says, "Ask and ye shall receive."\*

Before we answer this question directly, let us preface our reply by calling attention to the nature of the Christian Religion. Christianity is not a philosophy, it is *the* Way of Life. If Christianity were merely a philosophy, it might offer a neat and logical answer to all questions. But instead, our Religion offers the Way of True Living, and no one can entirely explain Life; it remains a mystery. Throughout the Christian Way of Life you will find what seem like contradictory statements. These seemingly opposing truths are not really contradictory; they are complementary, mutually completing. There is a great deal of Truth and Counter-Truth in the Christian Revelation. We are asked to believe in God, who is One in Three; in Jesus, who is God and Man; in the interworking of God's grace and man's free will.

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\* See St. Matthew vi, 5-8; vii, 7-11.



Prayer is another example of Truth and Counter-Truth; God knows and will give, *and* we must ask. God's knowledge of our need does not release us from the duty of asking His help.

Having mastered the underlying principles which answer the question "Why should we pray?" we can ask why we must ask and God will give. There seem to be three reasons. First, our proper relationship is preserved as children of our heavenly Father. If we received everything we needed without asking, we should become spoiled children, and should lose our sense of humility. Likewise, if we received everything we asked for, we should become unappreciative spoiled children. Here let it be interjected that there is no such thing as "unanswered" prayer. Sometimes God says "Yes," sometimes He says "No, it is not good for you," and sometimes He says "Wait." God will give you bread when you ask for a stone, and God will give you a fish when you ask for a serpent.

Secondly, we must ask because our gratitude is increased and strengthened thereby. Thanksgiving for being God's children is one of the results of prayer. The truest Christian is the most



thankful Christian.

Thirdly, prayer is the most creative act in which we can engage. Any father desires that his child should learn to make things. It is a creative act to build a boat or bake a cake. But the most creative action in which a soul can engage is to kneel down, reach out to One who is unproved, unseen, unfelt, and work with Him. The most wonderful of all works is to work with God, to co-operate with Him in establishing His kingdom of Truth and Righteousness and Love and Joy and Peace. To co-operate in bringing life to a soul is creative activity of the highest order.

Lastly, for what shall you pray?

1. For the things that you think you really need.
2. For right desires; to want better things.
3. For the coming of the Kingdom of God.
4. For those near and dear to you; for all in the mystical Body of Christ; the dying; the dead.
5. For those in suffering and need; the conversion of sinners; for all God's children.
6. For the peace of the world.
7. For those who pray for you; those who have asked your prayers.
8. In reparation: make acts of faith for the un-



believing, acts of hope for the despairing, acts of contrition for the unrepentant, acts of love for the selfish.

To do this properly, you must prepare an intercession book. You will want to pray for some few souls daily. Buy a cheap notebook. Divide up the book according to the days of the week and write in names according to your subjects. For example, Friday will suggest praying for the sick and suffering, the tempted and sinning. Thursday will suggest those who need the Sacraments, Sunday will be the time for thanksgiving, and so on.

Thus we come to thanksgiving, a very essential part of true prayer life.

## VII. AN EXAMINATION FOR OCCASIONS OF THANKSGIVING

**Y**OU are familiar with the idea of examining your life for occasions of sin. Have you ever made an examination for thanksgiving? Perhaps the following will prove suggestive.

Who were your parents and dearest relatives?

Thank God for them.

Who were the friends of your childhood?



Who was your parish priest?  
When were you baptized? Confirmed? When  
did you receive first Communion?  
Who first taught you to pray?  
Who were the people that made you happy?  
What events made you happy?  
When did you begin to appreciate beauty in  
nature, art, literature?  
When did you begin to appreciate Truth? Note  
down books, etc.  
When did you begin to appreciate Religion?  
What were the occasions?  
List all the people and occasions that made  
your childhood and youth blessed.

If you are married, recall the events that led  
up to your marriage and give thanks.  
Give thanks for your family by name.  
Give thanks for the people whom you admire  
or who have helped you.  
Recall all your happy times; holidays, trips,  
scenes, parties.  
Give thanks for your business and social rela-  
tionships.  
Give thanks for your Church relationships.



Praise God for His Love, for His revelation in Jesus Christ.

Praise God for the Incarnate Life and Atonement.

Praise God for the Resurrection and Ascension.

Praise God for the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Praise God for the Church, the mystical Body of Christ.

Offer thanksgiving for the Cross; for your cross.

Offer thanksgiving for all the difficulties and adventures of life.

Offer thanks for health, life, safety, hopes, ambitions, interests, work, ideals, vocation.

Praise God for the Holy Sacraments.

Praise God for the joy of worship and the hope of heaven.

Praise God for the fellowship of the Body of Christ on earth; in heaven.

Praise God for what God is, your Father, your Redeemer, your Friend.



## VIII. MENTAL PRAYER

**L**AST of all, just a word about meditation. People say mental prayer is difficult, and so it is. But it is much like many events in your daily life. Perhaps you received a package in the mail this morning. Your first act was to look at it. Then you proceeded to untie the package and see what it held. It was a long-desired book. Who sent it? The enclosed card revealed the name of a friend. What was your reaction? Your heart was filled with gratitude. Did you rest there? No, you sat down and wrote a letter of thanks.

There are many forms of meditation. But whatever the outline of your mental prayer, it will contain the same activities in which you engaged when receiving the book. Your first act in meditation is to look at a picture of our Lord or study one of God's mysteries. Your second act is to examine the subject intellectually, just as you untied the package. Your third point in a meditation is to pass from intellectual considerations to the affections of the heart, such as thanksgiving, contrition, worship, gratitude. Having realized in heart and mind your relationship to the matter in hand (whether it be a book or a mystery



of God), you conclude your action with a resolution.

These reactions of the mind, the heart, and the will occur through all forms of mental prayer, just as they happen throughout your ordinary day, whether it be a matter of receiving a book or visiting an art gallery or contemplating a sunset or enjoying the visit of a friend. For your convenience we append the outline of three forms of meditation.\* Try them out, change them about as you will, learn first to pray as the saints prayed,—and then go and develop your own type of meditation. Feel free to change your form of prayer as you are led by the Holy Spirit who first moves you to pray. But however you pray, remember that the only way to learn to pray is to pray.

## I. THE SULPICIAN FORM

1. First of all, get ready to pray. Remember the Presence of God. Adore God present saying the *Sanctus*. Assure Him of your faith in Him. Say the *Agnus Dei* for your failure in serving Him.

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\* For a full study of the various forms of mental prayer see "The Art of Mental Prayer" by the Rev. Bede Frost.



Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your meditation, saying, perhaps, the Collect for Pentecost.

2. Next comes the body of the meditation. It has three parts called:

- A. "Jesus before the eyes." This means that you should picture the mystery or scene about which you are praying. The realization of what the picture means should lead you to offer "acts" of worship, adoration, praise, thanksgiving. Dwell on these expressions of prayer as long as they sustain your praise.
- B. "Jesus in the heart." Ask yourself just what the subject has to do with you in your own life. How do you share in the mystery? This section should inspire you to acts of contrition, desire, spiritual communion.
- C. "Jesus in the hands." What will you do by way of co-operation with God? How will you express your ideals? How will you transfer from theory to action? Here is the place to form resolutions and offer them to God to be blessed.

3. Conclude your prayer by acts of thanksgiving.



## II. THE SALESIAN FORM\*

1. The Preparation consists of the usual acts of the Presence of God as indicated in the previous form, together with asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Consideration of the subject: thinking about the matter until something helpful comes to mind.
3. The Offering of your affections to God in acts of praise, gratitude, love, thanksgiving, etc. Dwell on these acts as long as they help you. The offering of the acts should lead to the forming of resolutions.
4. The Conclusion:
  - A. Thanksgiving for the gifts given you in your prayer.
  - B. The Oblation, or offering, of yourselves and your prayer to God.
  - C. Petition to God to bless your resolutions.
  - D. The gathering of a "spiritual nose-gay"; that is some phrase or text or thought to carry about during the day with the object of keeping you in touch with God.

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\* It will be recognized that this is a variation of the Ignatian Form.



### III. THE FRANCISCAN FORM\*\*

1. The Preparation.
2. The Reading of the Bible, or of some spiritual book.
3. The Meditation, or thinking about what has been read as to its meaning for you.
4. The Thanksgiving for your reading and prayer, leading on to other acts of thanksgiving.
5. The Oblation, or offering, of yourself to God. This should lead on to
6. The Intercession for others. In this form, much time is given to prayer for others. A good outline for such prayer is the Bidding Prayer or the Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church or the Prayer for All Sorts and Conditions of Men,—all in the Book of Common Prayer.

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\*\* The Carmelite Form is exactly the same as the Franciscan, except that the emphasis is placed on the Oblation rather than on the Intercession.



7. The Conclusion, as suggested in previous outlines.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that it is very important to prepare over night the subject matter of the meditation.



## APPENDIX A

### *Acts of Devotion*

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#### AN ACT OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

My God, I do not ask to prove Thee present,  
My God, I do not ask to feel Thee present,  
It is enough to know that Thou art here.

#### A MORNING PRAYER

I praise my God this day.  
I give myself to God this day.  
I ask God to help me this day.

#### AN ACT OF FAITH

My God, I believe in Thee and all Thy Church doth teach,  
because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.

#### AN ACT OF HOPE

My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because  
of Thy mercies, Thy promises, and Thy power.

#### AN ACT OF CONTRITION

My God, I am very sorry I have sinned against Thee who  
art so good; forgive me for Jesus' sake, and I will try to  
sin no more.

#### AN ACT OF LOVE

My God, I love Thee and I want to love Thee more.

#### AN ACT OF DEDICATION

Almighty Father, I offer Thee the work of this day. Illu-  
minate my mind that I may know Thee; inflame my heart  
that I may love Thee; strengthen my will that I may serve  
Thee, and do all things to the honour and glory of Thy  
holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Come Lord Jesus, dwell in Thy servant's heart, in the fullness of Thy strength, in the perfection of Thy ways, and in the holiness of Thy Spirit; and rule over every hostile power in the might of Thy Spirit, and to the glory of Thy Father.

## AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING

O my God, I thank Thee for all blessings Thou hast sent me this day and through my whole life.

## AN ACT OF WORSHIP

Blessed, praised, and adored be Jesus Christ on His throne of glory, in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and in the hearts of His faithful people.

## AN ACT OF ADORATION

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee; because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

## AN ACT OF INTERCESSION

O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood, hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

## BEFORE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that Thou art here, in Thy holy Sacrament. Make me love Thee and believe in Thee, all the days of my life. Bless my father and my mother, my relations and my friends, my teachers and my priest; the sick and the suffering, and all the holy dead; for Thy dear sake. Amen.

## FOR THE DEPARTED

Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, and let light perpetual shine upon them.



## AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING

### AFTER RECEIVING COMMUNION

MY GOD, for Thyself, the wonder of Thee, the beauty of Thee.

*(Refrain)*

O my God, how can I thank Thee. I desire  
to thank Thee. Teach me to thank Thee.

For every expression in creation of Thy Beauty, Power  
and Love.

*O my God, etc.*

For the unveiling of the Beauty, Power and Love that  
Thou eternally art in the person of the Incarnate Word.

*O my God, etc.*

For the power of His availing victory over sin and death.

*O my God, etc.*

For the Holy Spirit through whom we share the victorious  
Life of God.

*O my God, etc.*

For Thy sacramental gifts wherein though the world sees  
our Lord no more, we see Him; and whereby, because He  
lives, we live also.

*O my God, etc.*

For all the saints who have striven to glorify Thee, in their  
lives and deaths.

*O my God, etc.*

For all who by their lives or words have cheered me, stirred  
me, encouraged me, shamed me, rebuked me, convinced me  
of sin, selfishness, sloth, unworthiness of my high calling,

I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For every day of my life, for every opportunity of service,  
for every good and perfect gift,

*I thank my God, etc.*



## APPENDIX B

### SUGGESTED BOOKS

#### *Order from Holy Cross Press:*

Spiritual Guidance	FATHER HUGHSON, O. H. C.
Contemplative Prayer	FATHER HUGHSON, O. H. C.
Corda in Coelo	FATHER HUGHSON, O. H. C.
Lord, Hear My Prayer	FATHER HUGHSON, O. H. C.
The Work of Prayer	FATHER HUNTINGTON, O. H. C.
The Presence of God	FATHER WHITEMORE, O. H. C.
When Ye Pray	FATHER ROBERT LESSING
Intercession	CHRISTINE HEFFNER
Seeking After Perfection	FATHER W. L. PHILLIPS

#### *Order from Morehouse-Gorham Co.:*

Our Life of Prayer	J. WILSON SUTTON
My Book of Personal Devotions	LOUISA BOYD GILE
The Way of Light	CHRISTINE HEFFNER
Prayer Works	AUSTIN PARDUE
The Secret Way	JOSEPH WITTKOFSKI

#### *Order from Macmillan:*

The Art of Mental Prayer	BEDE FROST
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#### *Order from Appleton & Co.:*

Self-Training in Prayer	A. H. McNEILE
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*The Order of the Holy Cross is a monastic  
community for men in the Episcopal Church.*